

News Release

April 21, 2014

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Citizen board calls for legislative action to curb youth tobacco purchase

Increase to age 21 would bring tobacco in line with alcohol and recreational marijuana

Looking to reduce tobacco use among youth, the King County Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Administrative Board has voted to approve a resolution calling for a change to the legal age of tobacco purchase in Washington State. The board is asking legislators to change state law to increase the legal age to purchase all tobacco products to age 21.

"We are very concerned about the health hazards to youth caused by the use of tobacco," said Pat Godfrey, chair of the board, "and some health problems may not show up for several years."

The Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Administration Board is a volunteer board comprised of King County residents with personal or professional knowledge and expertise in alcohol and drug abuse. They provide recommendations and input to King County on programs, services, policy, and budget issues.

Tobacco continues to be one of the leading causes of preventable death and disease in King County and the nation. Cigarette smoking alone causes an estimated 480,000 deaths in the United States every year, according to the latest U.S. Surgeon General's report, with lung cancer being the leading cause of cancer deaths among both men and women. Smoking causes other cancers as well, including throat, mouth, nasal cavity, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, kidney, bladder, and cervix.

Almost 90 percent of adult smokers began smoking by age 18 and about 75 percent of adult smokers became daily smokers before age 21.

"We think age 18 is too young," said Godfrey, speaking on behalf of the Board. "At least make it comparable to the legal purchase of alcohol and recreational marijuana, both of which are set at age 21."

For more information on the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Administration Board, call Jim Vollendroff at 206-263-8903 or go to <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/SubstanceAbuse/Boards/AdministrativeBoard.aspx>

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King County Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Administrative Board

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